Serial No. 10/721,512

IN THE CLAIMS

The text of all pending claims, (including withdrawn claims) is set forth below. Cancelled and not entered claims are indicated with claim number and status only. The claims as listed below show added text with underlining and deleted text with strikethrough. The status of each claim is indicated with one of (original), (currently amended), (cancelled), (withdrawn), (new), (previously presented), or (not entered).

Please **AMEND** claims in accordance with the following.

1-13. (CANCELLED)

14.   (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A server connected with a plurality of multifunction machines via a network, the server comprising:

a plurality of functions that perform processing to a document;

a plurality of request processing units in communication that communicate with any of the plurality of functions, and cause one of the plurality of functions to perform the document processing according to a function request; functions and processing function requests received from at least one of the multifunction machines to execute the functions;

an assigning unit that assigns one of the request processing units to a multifunction machine based on a connection request for the function request from the multifunction machine, and sends a completion-of-assignment notification to the multifunction machine indicating that processing of athe function request is possible, wherein the request processing unit controls executing the function according to a function command received from the assigned multifunction machine;

an assignment canceling unit that cancels the assignment of the one request processing unit to the multifunction machine, when thea command of the requested function is not received from the assigned multifunction machine within a predetermined amount of time; and

an information recorder that has multifunction connection information indicative of whether the multifunction machine is acceptable to be in an operable state in linkage with the server, wherein the connection request from the multifunction machine is assigned to the one request processing unit in the assigning based on the multifunction connection information.

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15. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The server according to claim 14, wherein the completion-of-assignment notification has information of the function, and the function is processable by the server.

16. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The server according to claim 14,
wherein the function is a fax that faxes image data, and
wherein the request processing unit controls the fax and sends the image data received from the multifunction machine, when the request processing unit receives from the multifunction machine a fax command as the function command to fax the image data.

17. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The server according to claim 14,
wherein the function is a recorder that records image data, and
wherein the request processing unit records the image data received from the multifunction machine on the recorder, when the request processing unit receives from the multifunction machine a record command as the function command to record the image data.

18. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The server according claim 14, further comprising:
a utilizing situation recorder that records utilizing situation information received from the plurality of multifunction machines, the utilizing situation information being information how often each of the multifunction machines is used; and
a utilizing situation information transmitter that transmits, when any one of nodes on the network makes a request for transmitting the utilizing situation information, the utilizing situation information back to said node having transmitted a transmission request.

19. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The server according to claim 18, wherein the utilizing situation information transmitter transmits the utilizing situation information to the network nodes in accordance with a predetermined schedule.

20. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The server according to claim 18, the server further comprising:

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a destruction detecting unit that detects a destruction of the information recorded on the utilizing situation recorder;

a utilizing situation information managing unit that requests each of the multifunction machines to transmit the utilizing situation information when the destruction detecting unit detects the destruction, and again records the transmitted utilizing situation information on the utilizing situation recorder.

21.   (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A storage medium readable by a computer, the storage medium storing a program of instructions executable by the computer to perform a function as a server, the function comprising:

providing a plurality of functions that perform processing to a document;

providing a plurality of request processing units in-communicationthat communicate with any of the plurality of functions, and cause one of the plurality of functions to perform the document processing according to a function request-and-processing function requests received from at least one of the multifunction machines to execute the functions;

assigning one of the request processing units to a multifunction machine based on a connection request for the function request from the multifunction machine, and sending a completion-of-assignment notification to the multifunction machine indicating that processing of athe function request is possible, wherein the request processing unit controls executing the function according to a function command received from the assigned multifunction machine; and

canceling the assignment of the one request processing unit to the multifunction machine, when thea command of the requested function is not received from the assigned multifunction machine within a predetermined amount of time, and

storing multifunction connection information indicating whether the multifunction machine is acceptable to be in an operable state in linkage with the server, wherein the connection request from the multifunction machine is assigned to the one request processing unit based on the multifunction connection information.

22.   (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A method of executing multiple functions using multifunction apparatuses connected to each other via a network, comprising:

providing a plurality of functions in a multifunction apparatus that perform processing to a

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document;

    providing in the multifunction apparatus a plurality of request processing units ~~in communication~~that communicate with any of the functions, and cause one of the plurality of functions to perform the document processing according to a function request ~~and processing function requests received from at least one other multifunction apparatus to execute the functions~~;

    assigning one of the request processing units to the other multifunction apparatus based on a connection request for the function request from the multifunction apparatus, and transmitting an assignment notification to the multifunction apparatus indicating that processing of a~~the~~ function request is possible, ~~wherein the request processing unit controls executing the function according to a function command received from the assigned multifunction apparatus~~; and

    canceling the assignment of the request processing unit to the multifunction apparatus, when ~~the~~a command of the requested function is not received from the assigned multifunction apparatus within a predetermined amount of time.

    23.   (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The server according to claim 14, wherein the server has information of each of the multifunction machines, and the information has at least one of a status of the multifunction machine, a type of executable job, an address on the network, user information and a type of connection.

    24.   (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A server connected with a plurality of multifunction machines via a network, the server comprising:

    a plurality of functions that perform processing to a document;

    a plurality of request processing units ~~in communication with the functions and processing function requests received from at least one of the multifunction machines to execute the functions~~ that communicate with any of the plurality of functions, and cause one of the plurality of functions to perform the document processing according to the function request;

    an assigning unit that assigns at least one of the request processing units to a multifunction machine based on a connection request for the function request from the multifunction machine, and sends a completion-of-assignment notification to the multifunction machine indicating that processing of a~~the~~ function request is possible, ~~wherein the request~~

~~processing unit controls executing the function according to a function command received from the assigned multifunction machine~~; and

an assignment canceling unit that cancels the assignment of the <u>one</u> request processing unit to the multifunction machine, when ~~the~~<u>a</u> command of the<u> requested</u> function is not received from the assigned multifunction machine within a predetermined amount of time,

wherein the server has at least one of option information, multifunction machine connection information, non-self system linkage information, and intra self-system registration address information, the option information is information of ~~a function~~<u>any of the plurality of functions</u> executable by the server, the multifunction machine and the non-self system linkage information is used when the server accesses another system on the network, and the intra self-system registration address information is used when the server accesses intra self-system.

25.   (CANCELLED)